

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, a member of the House Democracy Partnership, today commented on efforts the Partnership has made to aid the Haitian government via the successful transfer of the former U.S. Embassy building in Port-au-Prince. The two Haitian parliamentary buildings were destroyed in the January 12 earthquake, but the old U.S. Embassy building, 100 yards away, remains intact. The House Democracy Partnership had been working with the U.S. State Department to transfer the old Embassy to the Parliament since its closure in 2008, and the State Department this weekend announced it would provide the building to Haiti's fractured government at nominal cost.

"My condolences are with the friends and families of all Haitians who perished in the tragic quake, including those Senators and parliamentary staff who were pulled from the wreckage," said Fortenberry. "While emergency relief aid generously streams into Haiti from across the world, it is imperative to assist the Haitian government in reconvening and taking appropriate legislative action to facilitate recovery. Through the work of the House Democracy Partnership, the U.S. State Department's gesture of goodwill directly enables the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate to go about the urgent work of repairing the nation."

The House Democracy Partnership is a bipartisan 20-member commission established by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2005 to support the development of independent democratic legislatures. The House Democracy Partnership and the Haitian Parliament developed a relationship following Haiti's 2006 elections in helping to strengthen Haiti's legislative body. Fortenberry had earlier urged the Partnership to include Haiti among the select group of 14 partner countries, and has continued to work with Haitian parliamentarians, particularly on matters of oversight and government reform and agricultural assistance.

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